Winning the Economic Firefight:
Translating Reconstruction Into Combat Power

By Colonel Christopher J. Toomey

As our Army deals with insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is becoming ever more apparent that the precise application of infrastructure development and reconstruction can markedly contribute to the overall success of our operations. This becomes extremely important as operations transition from military to nonmilitary centers of gravity; at some point, the traditional military effort becomes subordinate to more inherently nonmilitary tasks. Then it becomes more than just winning the fight on the battlefield, but also about winning hearts, minds, and even pocketbooks. It is about winning the "economic firefight."

While conducting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, our forces are continually exposed to crumbling and dysfunctional infrastructure that inhibit both establishing effective democratic governance and producing the economic revitalization necessary to ensure secure and stable environments. Inextricably linked, governance, economic revitalization, and security impact each other and together spiral upward or downward. As we face an enemy that exploits any weakness in our own forces and leverages dissatisfaction and hesitation in the civilian population, all of our tools are needed to create effects—outcomes—along these three lines of operations. The interrelationship of each capability—kinetic and nonkinetic, inherently military or not—must be both understood and exploited for maximum effect.

Considered long overdue by many, Department of Defense Directive 3000.05[1] elevated stability, security, transition, and reconstruction (SSTR) operations and propelled what was often regarded as secondary military roles into the mainstream of military operations—no longer the isolated purview of civil affairs, engineers, and military police units. Indeed, SSTR operations are both combined arms and interagency operations that require a degree of effects coordination that are arguably as complex as more traditional combat operations.

Terrestrial infrastructure—roads, bridges, power, and water resources—is in many ways the physical embodiment of a mature and functioning society. Their development facilitates economic revitalization and security. Coupled with good governance and reinforcement of rule of law, a sound infrastructure can promote trade and instill confidence in a nation's populace. By doing this, it can work with other more traditional capabilities to help defeat the enemy. Infrastructure development erodes support for the enemy by instilling a sense of material confidence in the ability of the legitimate government to deliver services. If the government can provide improved roads and reliable power, then the enemy's message that they offer "something better" becomes measurably less credible.

Afghan workers are an integral part of all reconstruction operations.

Infrastructure development also presents an attractive economic alternative to the population—a population that the insurgency needs for support. If power systems bring light industry and irrigation promotes greater crop yield, then the local populace is less inclined to either support insurgent forces or engage in illicit activity. Improved road networks extend and promote commerce and serve as direct economic stimuli and reduce the conditions where an insurgency can gain recruits.

When people have a stake in their community, they are less inclined to take action that will set them back. Carefully executed with an eye on building local buy-in and promoting ownership, infrastructure development serves to engender a greater democratic community spirit.

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED
JUN 2006		**00-00-2006 to 00-00-2006**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
Winning the Economic Firefight: Translating Reconstruction Into Combat Power	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **U.S. Army Engineer School,14010 MSCoE Loop BLDG 3201, Suite 2661,Fort Leonard Wood ,MO,65473-8702**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**3**	

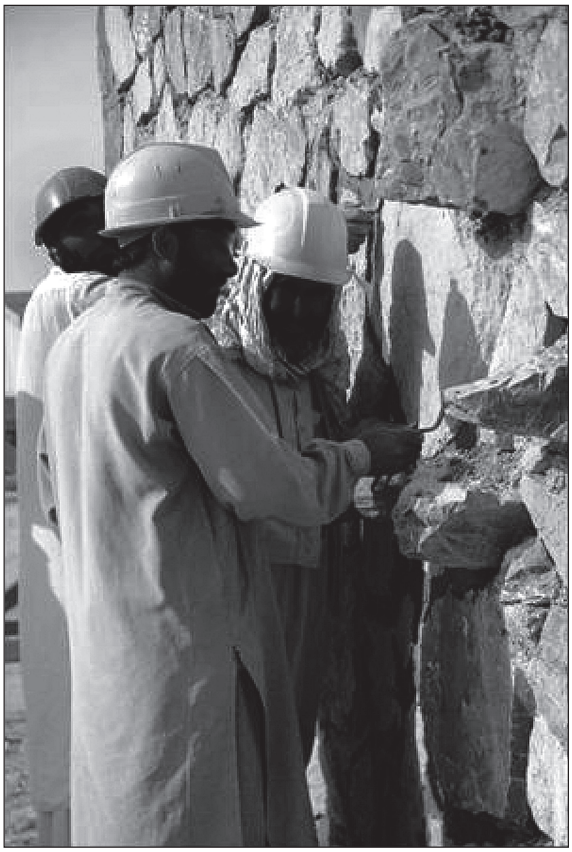
With a destroyed road network, minimal reliable power, dysfunctional water management, and a retarded internal capacity for development and sustainment, Afghanistan, perhaps more than Iraq, represents a country with a devastated infrastructure. Immature to begin with, it shows the pain of more than 25 years of near continuous conflict. While combating an active insurgency, U.S. and coalition forces are taking advantage of an excellent opportunity to effectively win the economic firefight and establish protocols for developing infrastructure as a complement to more traditional forms of combat power.

In approaching reconstruction in Afghanistan, U.S. and coalition forces of Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan (CFC-A) are employing a mix of assets—to include Provincial Reconstruction Teams, funding from the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP), and military engineers—while following four broad principles to getting the most out of their efforts:

- Maintain a coordinated, precision approach to selecting projects.
- Win local consensus and ownership while planning projects.
- Build local capacity as a key residual of project execution.
- Synchronize with kinetic and information operations throughout.

Working with the United States Embassy, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and other United States Government agencies within the context of a broader international effort—to include governmental donors, as well as a multitude of others—it is imperative that CFC-A's efforts are coordinated in order to minimize duplication of effort and to make sure the right area is targeted at the right time with the right effort. Given that not all ministries within the Afghanistan government are currently capable of providing direction and focus to the international community and that no one single body oversees coordinating infrastructure development in the country, CFC-A must aggressively work to deconflict its efforts with others. Through a series of forums such as CFC-A's Strategic Infrastructure Joint Planning Group, the development of an accepted infrastructure common operating picture (COP), to include a common infrastructure database format, was an essential step. By maintaining this dialogue across the international community, CFC-A can influence the time and location of stakeholder activity. Deliberately, CFC-A looks to directly engage in those areas where sizeable donor activity is absent, while focusing on high-payoff targets in contentious areas that will most benefit from reconstruction efforts with a residual contribution to enhancing security. For example, much of the international donor community is focused on improving the more than 6,000 kilometers of paved, national-level roads. However, there is only marginal activity in addressing the roads heading toward

Active mentoring of Afghan firms brings new skills, such as surveying.



Local construction techniques by local firms help ensure community buy-in.

the provincial capitals and district centers. CFC-A is targeting improving these roads while focusing on volatile areas that need the economic benefit derived from improved roads and simultaneously improving the access for security operations.

Ensuring local consensus and ownership dramatically enhances the impact of the reconstruction effort and its ability to deliver the effect. Working through the local Provincial Reconstruction Teams that are tied into the provincial and district leadership, CFC-A looks to engage the leadership at all levels, determining what needs to be done and where it needs to be done. Key stakeholders include the Community Democratic Councils that are formed under the Government of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program to provide grass roots input to community and infrastructure development while advancing democratic government. Local buy-in not only ensures that the community accepts the work, but it also greatly assists in increasing the likelihood that the community—often through the use of local firms—actually contributes to the execution of the particular project. Even in contentious areas, project security is enhanced if the community believes that they have a stake in its success and if locals are employed. By maintaining an "Afghan face" on any project, it gains greater overall acceptance.

Both in direct action and as a residual of the infrastructure development, capacity building—the capability of the government, community, and people to sustain themselves—must be considered. This includes everything from human capital (training and education) to corporate development to local governmental reform. Each and every project in CFC-A is seen as an opportunity to build capacity. This is done by employing local Afghans and establishing construction training programs, either on the job or as deliberate efforts. Additionally, the use of local firms requires a good degree of mentoring and training at the commercial level. Local companies are guided in construction estimates, scheduling, quality control, and safety standards. Using expertise found in the United States Army Corps of Engineers®, CFC-A is willing to accept a degree of inefficiency in construction practices while building this capacity. At the governmental level, CFC-A is helping build the governmental wherewithal to sustain what's been built and forecast for the future.

In seeking an outcome with the enemy, effects-based operations encourage the synchronized impact of both military and nonmilitary capabilities in achieving the commander's intent. Synchronizing reconstruction efforts with both information and kinetic operations optimizes their impact in contributing to the overall effect. The effects community within CFC-A is developing a marketing strategy to leverage reconstruction to promote many of the command's key themes and messages. In synchronizing with kinetic operations, reconstruction timing and placement is aligned to not only deconflict the battlespace but also to present reconstruction efforts as an attractive alternative to those who may be the direct or indirect targets of combat power. The use of well-validated vehicles such as a joint effects working group contribute markedly to delivering the necessary synchronization.

Looking toward the future, it is clear that the line between combat and reconstruction operations will continue to become ever more indistinct. It is necessary that our Army continues to improve how it conducts reconstruction operations so that it can stay relevant to the nation's needs. In doing this, it will draw on the lessons of both the past and today to improve for the future and ensure that it is ready for any test. In Afghanistan, CFC-A is pushing to increase the significance of reconstruction operations in order to take the campaign to the next level and win the economic firefight.

Colonel Toomey commands the Afghanistan Engineer District in Kabul. He commanded the 555th Combat Engineer Group and 555th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (Provisional) from 2003 to 2005.

Endnote

[1]Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations, 28 November 2005.*